Sufi Saints Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim : A historical study in regional perspective (18th - 20th century)

A synopsis submitted at Ranchi University for pursuing a Ph. D. in History

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Introduction:

Sufism has historically played a significant role in shaping India's socio-cultural fabric, particularly through the teachings and practices of Sufi saints. This study examines the lives and contributions of two prominent Sufi saints, Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim, within the regional context of Jharkhand from the 18th to 20th century. Their spiritual and social efforts contributed to the region's cultural synthesis and communal harmony, providing a framework for understanding localized expressions of Sufism.

During the 18th to 20th century, Jharkhand experienced significant socio-political changes, including the impact of colonial policies, tribal resistance movements, and economic shifts. Amid these transformations, Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim emerged as pivotal figures, addressing the spiritual and social needs of the region's diverse population. Their khanqahs (spiritual centers) served not only as places of worship but also as hubs for education, charity, and social reform, particularly for marginalized communities. Their teachings emphasized values such as love, equality, and service to humanity, resonating deeply with the local populace.

This research aims to explore the historical and cultural significance of these saints in Jharkhand. It will analyze their contributions to the region's social fabric, their role in fostering interfaith dialogue, and their impact on preserving local traditions. By employing primary sources such as archival records and oral histories, this study will illuminate their enduring legacy, offering a regional perspective on the transformative role of Sufism in Jharkhand's history

Ghaus Shah was a revered Sufi saint of 19th to 20th century. Presently his dargah is located at Chirua village in Giridi district of Jharkhand state. Gaus Shah's emphasis on the inner journey of self-purification resonated with many, encouraging followers to abandon worldly attachments and focus on spiritual growth. His teachings were marked by simplicity and an unwavering devotion to Allah (Almighty), inspiring countless individuals to adopt a path of humility and selflessness.

Badshah Abdur Rahim was a revered Sufi saint of 19^{th} - 20^{th} century. Presently his Dargah is located in Tatanagar in Jamshedpur district of Jharkhand state. Badshah Abdur Rahim's impact extended

beyond spiritual realms, as he advocated for social reform and justice. His teachings promoted equality, care for the underprivileged, and a deep sense of responsibility towards society. Through their teachings, both saints contributed to the spiritual upliftment and moral refinement of their followers.

The review of Literature .

There are several books that cast valuable insights on the present theme. Some of the important books including the following .

1. Schimmel, Annemarie (1975). Mystical Dimensions of Islam. The university of North Carolina press.

This book is essentially an introduction to Islam or rather traditional Islam and not the stripped down bare and devoid of culture Islam that is today propagated from the Gulf States. The book covers the history and development of Sufism in Islam, its leading founding members up to the establishment of the Sufi paths.This work explores the essence of Sufism, emphasizing its role in spiritual transformation and community cohesion.

2 . Ernst, Carl W. (1997). Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam. Shambhala Publications.

Carl Ernst explores the broadest range of Sufi philosophies and practices to provide one of the most complete and comprehensive introductions to Sufism in this book. He traces the history of the movement from the earliest days of Islam to the present day, along the way examining its relationship to the larger world of Islam and its encounters with both fundamentalism and secularism in the modern world.This book provides a detailed introduction to Sufism, focusing on personal spiritual development.

3 . Qureshi, Regula B. (2006). Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali. OUP, Pakistan.

This book is a ground-breaking study of cultural performance. Specifically it is about Qawwali, conventionally understood as the music of Sufism in South Asia. Qureshi's study on Sufi music sheds light on how Sufism promotes pluralism, tolerance, and cross-cultural connections.

4 . Currie, P.M. (1989). The Shrine and Cult of Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. New Delhi, Oxford University press.

This book offering a new interpretation of the Mui'in al-Din from a historical perspective, this study defines the role of the Sufi mystics in Islam and disentangles the Mu'in of history from the legendary creation of later hagiographical chronicles. Currie's analysis of the Chishti Sufi tradition shows how Sufi saints embedded themselves in local communities, shaping both spiritual and social norms.

5 . Sharib, Z.H (2006) The Sufi saints of Indian subcontinent, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal publisher.

This book offers biographical insights into the lives and teachings of prominent Sufi saints in South Asia. The book explores the spiritual journeys, character, and contributions of saints from different orders, such as Chishti, Qadri, Naqshbandi, and Suhrawardi. Sharib details their practices, education, poetry, mystical experiences, and the impact they had on spreading Sufi teachings. The work also emphasizes the importance of a spiritual guide (murshid) in the Sufi path and how these saints strived for union with the Divine.

6. Shushtery, A.M.A (2006) , Early Sufis and their Sufism, Delhi, Adam publishers.

He provides an in-depth exploration of the origins and development of early Sufi practices. It examines key figures, their philosophies, and spiritual contributions, emphasizing how these pioneers laid the foundation for later Sufi orders. Shushtery discusses the role of asceticism, love for the divine, and personal spiritual journeys in shaping Sufism, while also analyzing its spread and adaptation in different cultural contexts. This book serves as a comprehensive introduction to the mystical dimensions of Islam and their evolution over time.

7. Currium, R.M and G. Michell (2004) ; Dargah Abodes of the Saints, Marg.

"Dargahs: Abodes of the Saints," explores the spiritual and social role of Sufi shrines in India. It emphasizes the inclusive nature of dargahs, welcoming devotees from all backgrounds, including women and non-Muslims. The book examines the origins of these shrines, tied to Sufi saints from Central Asia and Iran, and their role as spaces of spiritual solace and community engagement, particularly during urs celebrations. With a focus on eleven major dargahs across India, the work is enriched by Karoki Lewis's photographs, offering both historical insights and visual narratives.

8 . Chaudhary, A.S (1998) ; In Sufism is not Islam, A comparative study, New Delhi: Regency Publication.

He examines the differences between Sufism and orthodox Islam. He argues that the two represent fundamentally distinct ideologies. The book explores the philosophical divergence, pointing out that while Islam emphasizes adherence to Sharia (Islamic law), Sufi teachings often prioritize mystical experiences and inner spirituality, which can lead to deviations from mainstream Islamic practices. The author uses examples from historical Sufi figures and contemporary teachers to argue that Sufism sometimes challenges or reinterprets Islamic doctrines, creating tension between the two traditions.

9. Eaton, R M (1974), Sufi Folk literature and The Expansion of Indian Islam, Historia religionum.

He argues that Sufis adapted Islamic teachings into accessible narratives, poems, and songs, making them relatable to local populations, including non-Muslims. This literature emphasized love, devotion, and mysticism, resonating with both the illiterate masses and those outside formal religious structures. Eaton highlights that Sufi literature facilitated cultural integration, blending Islamic and local traditions, which promoted conversions to Islam and the development of a distinct "Indian Islam" over time. The study illustrates the pivotal role of Sufi saints as intermediaries in this religious transformation.

10 . Aquil, R. (2007). Sufism in India. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.

In "Sufism in India", Raziuddin Aquil explores the history and development of Sufism in India from the 11th to the 19th centuries. He examines the lives and teachings of prominent Sufi saints, their interactions with Indian society, and the evolution of Sufi thought and practices. Aquil also discusses the impact of Sufism on Indian culture, politics, and religion, highlighting its role in promoting spiritual and cultural exchange between Muslims and non-Muslims. The book provides a comprehensive understanding of Sufism's significance in Indian history and its enduring influence on the country's spiritual landscape.

11 . Eaton, R. M. (1997). The Sufis of Bijapur. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

In "The Sufis of Bijapur", Richard M. Eaton explores the history and cultural significance of Sufism in Bijapur, a Deccan Sultanate kingdom in medieval India. He examines the lives and teachings of

prominent Sufi saints, their interactions with the ruling elite, and the impact of Sufism on the region's culture and society. Eaton highlights the unique blend of Islamic and local traditions, and how Sufism helped shape the kingdom's art, architecture, and literature. The book provides a nuanced understanding of Sufism's role in Bijapur's cultural and religious landscape, challenging stereotypes about Islamic influence in India.

12 . Gupta, M. K. (2015). Sufism and Indian Mystical Tradition. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers.

In "Sufism and Indian Mystical Tradition", M.K. Gupta explores the connections and exchanges between Sufism and India's indigenous mystical traditions. He examines the shared spiritual values, practices, and philosophies between Sufism and Indian mysticism, highlighting the contributions of Sufi saints and Indian mystics. Gupta discusses the role of love, devotion, and spiritual growth in both traditions, and how they have influenced each other. The book provides a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural spiritual dialogue between Sufism and Indian mysticism, revealing the rich tapestry of India's spiritual heritage.

Research Gap :

A noticeable literature Gap exists in the intricate dynamics of Sufi preachings in the socio-cultural and religious landscape of Jharkhand remain an underexplored domain. Existing literature largely overlooks the specificities of how Sufi doctrines and practices interacted with indigenous traditions and the pluralistic milieu of Jharkhand. There is scant analysis of how these saints navigated and influenced the socio-political and cultural complexities of a region marked by distinct tribal cosmologies and evolving agrarian systems. This gap not only restricts our understanding of the regional impact of Sufism but also diminishes the recognition of Jharkhand as a significant site of spiritual and cultural confluence during the medieval and early modern periods.This research seeks to address this lacuna by critically examining the teachings and practices of Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim, exploring their role in fostering communal harmony, ethical values, and spiritual transformation in Jharkhand. By situating their impact within the broader socio-cultural and historical context of the region, this study aims to contribute to the neglected discourse on Sufism’s localized influences in Eastern India.

Statement of the Problem : The primary problem this research addresses is the lack of comprehensive understanding of the teachings and impact of Sufi saints Gaus Shah and Badshah

Abdur Rahim on Jharkhand's spiritual, social, and cultural development. While their contributions are acknowledged, there is limited scholarly exploration of how their messages influenced community cohesion, social reform, and spiritual practices. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing their teachings, assessing their impact on their followers, and examining how their legacies continue to shape contemporary spiritual and social thought in the region.

Research Objectives :

The present work intends to

Analyze the core teachings of Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim, focusing on their spiritual, social, and ethical principles.

Other objectives of the work might include the following :

* To explore the historical and cultural context in which their teachings emerged and gained prominence in Jharkhand.

* To assess the influence of their preachings on the social and religious practices of their followers and local communities.

* To examine the role of their teachings in promoting communal harmony, tolerance, and social reform in Jharkhand.

* To compare the distinct spiritual approaches of Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim, identifying their complementary or contrasting elements.

Finally, we would focus on evaluating the continuing relevance of their teachings in modern spiritual and socio-cultural contexts.

Research Hypothesis:

* Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim shaped followers' spiritual practices.

* Promoted social harmony and reduced communal tensions.

* Gaus Shah focused on individual in moral transformation.

* Badshah Abdur Rahim emphasized social justice and reform.

* The distinct but complementary teachings fostered holistic spiritual and social change.

* Their legacies continued to influence modern movements and community efforts in Jharkhand.

Research Design

Research Methodology

The research methodology employ in this study is a mixed-methods approach, combining both Qualitative and Quantitative methods.

The Qualitative : In-depth interviews with devotees, descendants, and local community members to gather primary data on the teachings, practices, and legacy of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim .Content analysis of Sufi texts, manuscripts, and literature related to the two saints. Observations of Sufi rituals, ceremonies, and daily life at the shrines.

The Quantitative : Surveys and questionnaires to collect data on the social, cultural, and religious impact of the two saints on Jharkhand in society and culture. Statistical analysis of data to identify trends, patterns, and correlations.

Historical Method : Historical research method to analyze the historical context and evolution of Sufism in Jharkhand.

Comparative Analysis : Comparative analysis to examine the similarities and differences between the teachings and practices of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim.

This mixed-methods approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and religious impact of the two Sufi saints on Jharkhand in society and culture.

Tools and techniques for data collection

1. Primary Data Collection:

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with followers, religious leaders, and scholars familiar with the teachings of Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim. Interviews with local community members in areas influenced by these saints to understand the societal impact.

Field Visits and Observations: Visits to important dargahs, shrines, and locations associated with these saints to document ongoing spiritual practices and rituals. Participant observation of annual events, gatherings, and religious activities to capture their contemporary relevance.

2. Secondary Data Collection:

Archival Research: Exploration of historical documents, manuscripts, and old texts available in libraries and religious institutions. Consultation of administrative and historical records, including government gazetteers and records from the period of the saints.

Literature Review: Review of books, journal articles, and theses related to Sufi teachings and their socio-cultural impact. Analysis of prior research on the saints' contributions to communal harmony and social reforms in the region.

3. Questionnaire Surveys: Structured questionnaires administered to followers, locals, and scholars to gather quantitative data on perceptions and experiences of the saints' influence on personal and community life.

4. Case Studies: In-depth case studies of specific communities or families deeply influenced by these saints to illustrate the lasting effects of their teachings on social structures and norms.

5. Audio-Visual Documentation: Collection of photographs, videos, and oral histories related to the saints' teachings and practices to support the qualitative data.

This mixed-method approach will provide both depth and breadth in analyzing the spiritual and social impacts of Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim's preachings.

Analysis of data :

1. Thematic Analysis: Identify themes and patterns in the teachings, practices, and legacy of the two Sufi saints.

2. Content Analysis: Analyze Sufi texts, manuscripts, and literature to understand the cultural and religious significance of the two saints.

3. Comparative Analysis: Compare the teachings and practices of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim to identify similarities and differences.

4. Statistical Analysis: Analyze survey data to identify trends and correlations between the cultural and religious practices of the two saints and their impact on Jharkhand society and culture.

5. Data Triangulation: Combine data from multiple sources (interviews, observations, texts) to increase validity and reliability of findings.

6. Pattern Matching: Identify patterns and themes across data sources to understand the cultural and religious impact of the two saints.

7. Interpretation: Interpret findings in light of the research question, literature, and cultural context to understand the significance of the two saints in Jharkhand society and culture.

Relevance of study :

" Sufi Saints Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim : A historical study in regional perspective (18th - 20th century) " is highly relevant in today's context. It sheds light on the significance of Sufism in promoting peace, harmony, and cultural diversity in the region. The study's findings can inform strategies for promoting interfaith understanding, social cohesion, and cultural heritage preservation. Moreover, it can contribute to a deeper understanding of Jharkhand's rich cultural and religious landscape, ultimately enriching our knowledge of India's diverse cultural tapestry. The study's relevance extends beyond academia, benefiting policymakers, community leaders, and the general public.

Need and utility of the topic in current scenario:

The topic " Sufi Saints Gaus Shah and Badshah Abdur Rahim : A historical study in regional perspective (18th - 20th century) " is highly relevant in the current scenario, where cultural and religious diversity are under threat. The study's exploration of Sufism's role in promoting peace, harmony, and cultural coexistence is crucial in today's polarized world. As Jharkhand faces challenges related to cultural identity, social cohesion, and religious extremism, this research can inform strategies for promoting inclusive development and cultural heritage preservation. Furthermore, the study's findings can benefit policymakers, community leaders, and civil society organizations working towards social harmony and cultural diversity. By examining the past and present significance of these Sufi saints, the study can contribute to a more inclusive and peaceful future for Jharkhand and beyond.

Contribution in current knowledge :

This study makes a significant contribution to current knowledge by providing a comprehensive comparative analysis of the teachings, practices, and legacy of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim. It fills the existing knowledge gap on the impact of these Sufi saints on Jharkhand in society and culture, shedding light on their role in promoting peace, harmony, and cultural coexistence. The research expands our understanding of Sufism's significance in the region, offering new insights into its influence on social cohesion, inclusive development, and cultural heritage preservation. By examining the lives and teachings of these two saints, the study enhances our understanding of Jharkhand's cultural and religious landscape. The findings of this research can inform policymakers, community leaders, and civil society organizations, making it a valuable resource for promoting social harmony and cultural diversity. Ultimately, this study contributes to interdisciplinary research, combining history, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies.

Future Work :

Future work can explore the application of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim's teachings in contemporary social and cultural contexts, harnessing their legacy to promote interfaith understanding and social cohesion. This can involve investigating the impact of their teachings on modern social issues, such as extremism and cultural polarization. By doing so, researchers can unlock the transformative potential of Sufism in shaping a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Tentative chapter scheme

Introduction

1 : Historical Background .

2 : Early life and learnings of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim .

3 : Teachings and Practices of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim .

4 : Legacy of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim .

5 : Comparative Analysis of their Impact.

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix

Bibliography

Primary sources

1. Original writings and poetry of Hazrat Syed Gaus Shah and Hazrat Syed Badshah Abdur Rahim .

2. Biographies and hagiographies written by contemporaries or early followers.

3. Sufi texts and manuscripts from the 19th-20th century.

4. Oral traditions and stories passed down through generations.

5. Archival records and documents from Sufi shrines and institutions.

6. Personal correspondence and letters of the two saints.

7. Contemporary accounts and travelogues of visitors to Jharkhand.

8. Local folklore and cultural practices influenced by the two saints.

9. Old photographs, artwork, and architectural designs related to the saints and their shrines.

Secondary sources .

1. Interviews with descendants, devotees, and local community members.

2. Diaries and journals of British colonial officials and Christian missionaries (18th-20th century).

3. Reports and documents from the British Indian government, Indian government and administrative records.

4. Newspapers and periodicals from the region (18th-20th century).-

5. Photographs and films from colonial and post-colonial periods.

6. Audio recordings of Sufi music, devotional songs, and oral traditions.

7. Private papers and collections of local zamindars (landowners) and aristocrats.

8 . Records of Sufi orders and institutions, such as the Chishti, Surawardi, Qadiri, or Naqshbandi.

9. . Local gazetteers, district records, and village-level documents.

10. . Ethnographic accounts and field notes from anthropologists and sociologists.

11. Unpublished theses, dissertations, and research papers on related topics.